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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MA](#) [MP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)  
SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN  
ANTANANARIVO

REF: A. A. ANTANANARIVO 245  
[1](#)B. B. ANTANANARIVO 316  
[1](#)C. C. ANTANANARIVO 354  
[1](#)D. D. ANTANANARIVO 355  
[1](#)E. E. TD-314/032662-09

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: This cable provides further information on the security situation in Antananarivo and Madagascar in support of post's request (refs C and D) to lift ordered departure status, and in preparation for the Ambassador's meetings next week in Washington. Since a limited resurgence in violence between April 20 and 25, the city of Antananarivo has been entirely free of violent street demonstrations with police forces deployed throughout the city establishing a visible routine police presence. Daily life in Antananarivo has returned virtually to pre-crisis conditions with businesses and citizens focusing on their normal daily activities. In addition a number of potential flashpoints have passed in the last month without incident or confrontation, violent or otherwise, between the Legalists and the High Transitional Authority (HAT) government. There has been no credible threat or concrete action against the US mission or its personnel since March. Looking forward, post has no information to indicate that the calm conditions prevailing for the past month will not endure for the foreseeable future. While the underlying political crisis has not been resolved through negotiations, which are continuing, the security situation here clearly has reverted to its pre-crisis status. Specifically, violent street confrontations appear to have ended some weeks ago. And the concerns we expressed about a possible backlash against the US and its interests -- which were precisely what prompted our request for OD on March 17 -- no longer obtain.

2.(C) CALM IN TANA: Over the past month, Antananarivo has returned to its normal daily routines. City center businesses have reopened their doors and in some cases have quickly rebuilt destroyed stores after the late January civil unrest. City municipal services work, albeit at a slower pace, with city workers focused on trash removal services from community neighborhoods and filling in potholes after three months of inaction by city hall due to the political impasse. The National Police continue to maintain a heavy police presence on the streets of Antananarivo to reassure a weary public whose main concern after the coup is the increase in petty street crime and armed attacks on small businesses. The public in Antananarivo quickly became educated and outraged that a large number of these small business robberies are being carried out by the CAPSAT military unit, with a few media outlets daring to report vaguely about CAPSAT's freelancing activities. The Regional Security Office continues to maintain weekly contacts with key local district police commanders who have avoided the political fallout of

position reassignments that have plagued the military and Gendermerie. After the coup d'etat, the National Police continue to focus on their core police duties and have not participated in politically motivated arrests and have been one of the few institutions to not be tainted by the coup. On March 21, authorities lifted the nighttime curfew imposed on Antananarivo and its surrounding suburbs and the provincial capitals and countryside continue to remain calm. Gasoline and food stocks continue to be well stocked and plentiful. Food prices have stabilized although some commodities have experienced price appreciation since the start of the political crisis due to the destruction of Ravalomanana's food monopoly TIKO. Local small food businesses continue to be well stocked with no reports of wide scale shortages of basic food items. There are no shortages or price increases that are posing a problem for the large remaining expatriate population and elites of the city. Utilities, the internet, and the airport all have functioned normally since the coups. The Tamatave port has seen several short-lived strikes that occasionally delayed container movements. All schools, including the American School, have remained open since the coup.

13. (C) POTENTIAL FLASHPOINTS PASS AND PEACEFUL LEGALIST RALLIES CONTINUE: The potential flashpoints of May 1 (Labor Day), May 5 (the opening of parliament) and historically important May 13, passed with no altercations between the Legalists and security forces. Since the banning of public assemblies on April 21 by the HAT in an effort to maintain control of the city due to the street demonstrations during the week of April 20 -25, the HAT has loosened its ban on political rallies by allowing the Legalists to gather peacefully at Ravalomanana's food distribution warehouse. This facility is located on private property, a few kilometers outside the city center. Normally, weekday crowds range from 1,000 to 2,000 with weekend crowds increasing to 4,000 members. The rallies contain a professional program of musical entertainment, religious ceremonies, and political speeches by party leaders and lack any hostile talk of marching to retake ministries or taking the fight to the streets. The Legalists received a two day reprieve by the authorities to hold rallies at Democracy Park on May 15 and 16 but have since been denied access to Democracy Park; instead they have reconvened at the food distribution warehouse. Since the coup d'etat, Legalists numbers at the rallies have steadily declined due to a steady defection of TIM leaders willing to break ranks and join or negotiate with the HAT. Secondly, TIM's core base is made up of middle and upper-middle class voters who maintain full-time jobs and can only realistically attend rallies on the weekend. Finally, the population at large recognizes the fact that security forces are willing to resort to intimidation and violence in an expedited manner to gain the upper hand against demonstrators and maintain control. Security forces continue to station a quick reaction force near the Legalists' venue to contain any potential violence, prevent provocative acts, and provide protection to area businesses. This approach has been effective.

14. (C) FOREIGN MISSIONS AND UN CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL: During the height of the political crisis, other than the US Mission, only the World Bank and German Mission went to a departure status. Both have since returned their staff and family members. The United Nations went to phase 2 around the coup (heightened state of security awareness) but has since dropped down to their lowest security level of phase 1. The French Embassy and United Nations continue to advise their community to avoid political demonstrations and practice basic personal security awareness. Since the start of political demonstrations in mid-December, there have been no reports of any diplomatic or non governmental personnel being targeted by political demonstrators.

15. (C) US MISSION AND IVANDRY NEIGHBORHOOD REMAIN SAFE: Since the start of the political crisis, the US Mission residential neighborhood, Ivandry, has had no reported residential break-ins and the National Police continue to maintain a normal police presence in the area with police officers

normally deployed at a nearby gas station 100 meters from the neighborhood. In addition, a commercial building across the street from the Ivandry neighborhood continues to house a small detachment of soldiers assigned to protect the building. In addition to 24 hour guard coverage at all US Mission residences, the LGF mobile patrol and the European Union mobile patrol continue to make daily rounds within the Ivandry neighborhood. RSO continues to monitor and report to Washington, DC, through the SIMAS database, the steady increase in crime within the city of Antananarivo which is rated critical for crime. The Embassy's National Police Detachment and LGF continue to provide sufficient security coverage around the Embassy perimeter which has been unaffected by protests around the city center. Since the start of the crisis, the US Embassy has not had any demonstrations occur at the chancery. The Legalist gatherings at the food distribution warehouse take place near a commercial building which houses USAID. To date, gatherings at this venue have been peaceful and business operations at USAID have been unaffected by the rallies. Police protection of the CMR has been reliable and professional throughout. Our surveillance detection units have detected no surveillance of USG facilities or personnel, including the COM and his residence. Recent media attacks against the Ambassador and the USG position calling for early elections have not generated any threats to his or mission security.

¶6. (S/NF) CAPSAT RHETORIC AGAINST THE US MISSION: Since CAPSAT's brief discussion in early May of ways to put pressure on the US Embassy, Regional Affairs Office (RAO) sources have picked up no additional talk by CAPSAT to target the US Embassy; RAO's continuing monitoring of CAPSAT's internal discussions gives post confidence that no such planning is taking place. In this event, through indirect and direct intermediaries, the US Mission and Ambassador quickly advised TGV and his Foreign Minister on May 8 and 9 that any action against the US Mission or personnel would be ill-advised and have dire consequences for the HAT and CAPSAT. Their responses were immediate that no such action would occur. In addition, Post's knowledge of this conversation by CAPSAT probably provided a quick reality check to CAPSAT and the HAT that the US Mission was closing following and aware of their activities and discussions. Other than this conversation by CAPSAT, there have been no credible threats against the US Mission or personnel.

¶7. (C) AIRPORT OPERATION: Since the start of the political crisis, flight operations at Ivato International Airport have continued uninterrupted. The Ivato area and the main road leading to the airport from Ivandry have been relatively free of any disturbances since the start of the turmoil. International flights continue regularly. Due to a decline in passenger traffic caused by the political crisis and world economic crisis, Air France reduced their flights from five per week to three. Air Madagascar has altered their flight schedules due to reduced passenger traffic and financial losses. However, Antananarivo continues to receive international flights from Mauritius, South Africa, Thailand, Reunion, Comoros, and France. With the high tourist season just starting, Madagascar is preparing for the expected return of some European tourists and hoping to see increased passenger traffic increase. Most embassies have "normalized" their travel advisories to encourage a resumption of tourist arrivals.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Looking forward, post has no information to indicate that the calm conditions prevailing for the past month will not endure for the foreseeable future. While the underlying political crisis has not been resolved through negotiations which continue, the security situation for Americans here has reverted to its pre-crisis level. Specifically, violent street confrontations appear to have ended some weeks ago. And the concerns we expressed about a possible backlash against the US and its interests -- which were precisely what prompted our request for OD on March 17 -- no longer obtain. End comment.

